and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) on deemed deputation, 419 staff have so far opted for absorption in IRCTC and the rest have submitted option to revert back to Railway. However, the last date for exercising the option for absorption in IRCTC is 31.10.2007.

(b) Many steps have been taken by IRCTC to ensure job satisfaction and job security of the deemed deputationists in IRCTC like, the services rendered by them in railways will be treated as continued for their retirement benefits and the benefits which were available in railways have been protected. Besides this, they have been offered the pay and allowances of IRCTC and higher grade and pay. They have been counseled on one to one basis to explain the benefits offered by IRCTC on their absorption.

Advanced reservation facility

1510. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that he had announced in this Railway Budget that advanced reservation facility would be made available upto three months prior to the departure of the journey and accordingly implemented it which was beneficial to the large sections of the people;

(b) whether lately, his Ministry has reduced the advanced reservation facility upto two months; and

(c) the reasons for not implementing this facility?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Advance Reservation Period (ARP) for rail reservation was enhanced from 60 days to 90 days *w.e.f.* 01/03/2007. This modification was made prior to presentation of Railway Budget for Financial Year 2007-08.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) ARP has been reduced from 90 days to 60 days *w.e.f.* 15/07/2007 based on the booking pattern and the feedback received from Zonal Railways.

Facilities to passengers

†1511. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the facilities provided to the passengers of express trains and superfast trains by Railways;

(b) whether it is a fact that facilities have not been raised in any manner for the passengers of the trains categorized as superfast trains since last year;

(c) if not, the details of such facilities; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) the measures taken by Government for prevention of corruption in the facilities meant for the passengers of above trains and the details of the achievement gained out of this mechanism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Super fast trains are faster than non- superfast trains. Their average speed on the entire run in both Up and Down directions is minimum 55 kmph on broad gauge and 45 kmph on meter gauge. The facilities for express and superfast trains are generally similar except for special categories like Rajdhani, Shatabdi etc. The facilities provided by the Railways to the passengers including those of Express and Superfast trains are as under:

(i) Toilets in coaches;

(ii) Cushioned seats and berths in reserved coaches;

(iii) Passenger amenities like coat hooks, snack table, mirror, magazine bag, bottle holders etc. in reserved coaches;

(iv) Curtains in AC coaches;

(v) Provision of fluorescent tube light fitting in place of incandescent lamps.

(vi) Improved ventilation in general second class coaches by provision of additional fans;

(vii) Provision of 110 V AC single phase five pin socket and switch for charging of mobile phone and lap top computer in select AC coaches;

(viii) For the security of passengers, Express and Superfast trains are escorted by RPF and GRP personnel over Indian Railways;

(ix) Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) have been entrusted with the role of providing on-board catering services in selected long-distance Mail/Express/Superfast Express trains including Rajdhani, Shatabdi Express. Train side vending is being provided wherever feasible on trains not having Pantry Cars. In Rajdhani/Shatabdi trains packaged drinking water and newspaper are also provided besides the regular catering services.

Indian Railways always endeavour to provide satisfactory service to its passengers.

(b) and (c) Superfast trains, as explained earlier, are having lesser transit time due to lesser number of stoppage etc.

(d) Regular preventive checks/special drives are conducted for prevention of corruption and staff, if found guilty, are taken up under Disciplinary and Appeal Rules. The aim to prevent corruption encompasses all type of trains and not specially designed for a particular type of train. Therefore these can not be segregated and detailed for superfast trains.